

Making a Positive Impression on the World

Currently, the United States has participated in so many acts that have been frowned upon by the global community that our first priority is merely a return to decency and respectability in the eyes of the foreign public. An international survey conducted by foreign newspapers in 2008 found that 77 percent of interviewed Canadians' perception of the United States had significantly deteriorated since the start of the Bush administration. In the survey, 86 percent of interviewed Swiss also expressed lowered views of the United States. Foreign opinion of our nation has drastically declined following George W. Bush's presidency and the start of the Iraq war. Although international sentiment regarding the United States has slightly improved since 2008 with the beginning of the Obama administration, the favorable image the United States once enjoyed has suffered noticeably in the past decade. As a consequence, our country has greater difficulty in gaining foreign support on issues we promote. The United States' international reputation is important globally because while the United States has the potential to lead, its recent actions do not constitute an acceptable example to other nations; in order to improve its reputation, the United States should participate actively in the United Nations and adopt a leadership role to encourage humanitarian activities worldwide.

As a well-developed and prestigious country with solid democratic values and a commitment to justice, the United States can act as a leader for other countries; however, morally questionable decisions made by the United States have severely weakened its reputation. According to a poll made by BBC, only 35 percent of foreigners believe that the United States has a positive influence on the world, which is barely one-third of the population. Furthermore, the citizens of foreign countries currently have very little faith in the United States and are not overly supportive of the United States' actions, as Americans have committed morally

questionable acts in their pursuit of justice. Many of the detainees in the Guantanamo Bay prison who were accused of terrorist acts were actually found to be innocent, and soldier Erik Saar revealed that the Americans' methods of interrogation were morally and ethically unsound. These findings decreased the popularity of the United States in foreign opinion, especially in countries with Muslim populations. Due to its democratic standards, just principles, advanced development, and wealth the United States has the potential to become a favorable role model for other nations; however, the United States is unable to assume a leadership position because of its current unpopularity.

The United States has not played an active role in the United Nations and has acted rashly on issues without the approval of other nations. In order to create a more positive global reputation for the United States, Americans should be more cooperative towards foreigners in solving international issues. In the United Nations in 2003, only Britain, the United States, Bulgaria, and Spain strongly supported initiating a war in Iraq while countries such as Germany, Russia, and France strongly opposed it. However, despite widespread disapproval the United States invaded Iraq. As a result, the unpopularity of the United States drastically increased. In order to improve foreign opinions of the United States, it would be favorable to cooperate and consult with other countries instead of taking matters into our own hands. Furthermore, Americans have not always made the correct judgment in situations with which they are unfamiliar. In Afghanistan, American troops killed innocent Afghani civilians, mistaking them for militants, because they did not confer with with the local police. Poor judgment made by Americans that resulted in the senseless murder of foreign citizens does nothing but create animosity towards our country. By making a greater effort to cooperate with and respect other nations, the United States will be able to improve its sunken international image.

The United States has also invested an inordinate amount of resources into fighting wars in distant countries, creating distrust and dislike towards Americans internationally; rather than funding other nations' conflicts, we should use the money to fund humanitarian groups and actively support humanitarian activities globally. Redirecting our focus from participating or instigating other nations' wars to aiding humanitarian efforts will help create a peaceful and morally responsible image of the United States. Americans have been widely distrusted because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which have caused large casualties for civilians and soldiers alike. Instead of pouring money into fighting fruitless wars, the United States would be better off investing its resources in more peaceful endeavors. In Sudan, civilians living in Darfur are suffering from attacks by the Janjaweed, ruthless gunmen who have driven many innocent civilians out of their homes. The government of Sudan is currently neglecting its people's needs and the president has been convicted by the United Nations for crimes against humanity. In order to help the people in Darfur, the United States should actively encourage and fund aid organizations to provide the civilians with water, food, shelter, and medical care. Participating in humanitarian activities aimed at helping people around the world would not only improve the United States' image, but would also promote appropriate principles and ethics.

Today, the international reputation of the United States could change the future of global society. By improving its reputation and assuming a leadership role, the United States could create a more peaceful world in which nations help one another. The United States has the ability to lead and aid other countries, but this potential is restricted by international disfavor of the United States. By encouraging cooperation between nations and favoring peaceful solutions instead of wars, the United States can earn admiration and prestige among other countries by working towards solving problems instead of creating them. To ensure a more secure,

democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community, it is necessary for the United States to improve its global reputation and once again earn foreign respect by becoming a true leader of nations.

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